Research Notes for Sampson / Samuel Rook (1771 - 1855)

Research Overview:

Samuel Rook, also recorded as Sampson Rook, was born in 1771 in Kent and lived his entire life within a narrow geographic corridor east of Maidstone, moving later through Selling and Sheldwich. He appears first in the records as an illegitimate child, baptized without a named father, and last as an elderly pauper buried in Sheldwich in 1855. Across more than eighty years, he left a long documentary trail shaped by poverty, repeated family loss, and he remained in the same small part of Kent throughout his life. His life is compelling not because it is exceptional, but because it can be followed across a long span of time, and is anchored in relationships rather than property or status.

The earliest record of Samuel's life is his baptism in 1771, naming only his mother, Elizabeth Rook. No father is identified, and no later record resolves that absence. That record fixes Samuel's status at birth and sets a limit on what can be known with certainty about his origins. Later baptismal records naming Samuel as the father of his own children suggest continuity of identity between "Sampson" and "Samuel," but they do not supply information about his parentage. The absence of a named father is not a gap in research but a condition of the surviving records.

By 1795, Samuel had married Lydia Ford, and between 1799 and 1808 the couple had multiple children baptized in Kent villages, including Badlesmere and Snelling. Lydia died in 1808, followed closely by the death of at least one infant child. These early family years show repeated movement within a small rural area, consistent parish affiliation, and no evidence of property ownership or skilled occupation. The pattern that emerges is one of laboring poverty, punctuated by frequent interaction with parish institutions through baptisms, burials, and later poor relief.

In 1812, Samuel married Sarah Cox, and the family settled more permanently in Selling and then Sheldwich. Over the next two decades, Samuel and Sarah had a large family, with children baptized regularly and burials recorded when those children did not survive. Parish records and later census entries identify Samuel as a pauper and agricultural laborer,

including a period when he was associated with the Selling workhouse. These records do not explain how the family sustained itself, but they consistently place Samuel within the lowest economic tier of rural Kent society.

Despite economic instability, Samuel remained in the same small area of east Kent throughout his life. His movements from birth to death stayed within a handful of neighboring parishes, even as parish records repeatedly place him within the poor relief system. Over time, his children and grandchildren began to establish more stable households and modest respectability, without returning to the poorhouse system that defined his adult life. Nearly all descendants remained in England; only one child emigrated to Canada. Samuel died in Sheldwich in April 1855 and was buried there, closing a life that began and ended within the same local landscape.

The record of Samuel Rook is substantial but limited. His marriages, children, census entries, and burial are documented; the records are silent on much else. They do not show social rise, rupture, or reinvention. Instead, they trace a life lived consistently within parish systems, shaped by poverty and repeated reliance on institutional support. Samuel’s life is legible not because it is complete, but because it remained contained within the same local structures from beginning to end.

Timeline

1771– **Born** at Maidstone, Kent, England.

13 Sep 1771– **Christening** at Whichling, Kent, England.[1]

This baptism records Sampson, born to Elizabeth Rook, with no father named. In a later baptismal record, Sampson is identified as the father of his son Daniel. Taken together, these records support the identification of Sampson and Samuel Rook as the same individual. No evidence appears in the records to suggest two separate men.

11 Oct 1795 - Marriage to Lydia Ford (1772 - 1808) at Challock, Kent, England.[2]

Dec 1797 - Death of mother Elizabeth Rooke (1772 - 1808) at Kent, England.[3]

Jul 1799 - Birth of daughter Mary Rook (1799 - 1884) at Kent, England.[4]

I have not confirmed that Mary Rook, daughter of Samuel Rook and his first wife, Lydia Ford, was the same woman who married James Butler and later moved to Canada. DNA matches indicate this connection.

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[1] Baptismal record for Samuel Rook

[2] England Marriages, 1538–1973", database, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:NN4M-MNG: 13 March 2020), Sampson Rooke, 1795.

[3] Selling St. Mary the Virgin, Selling, Kent, England, Composite [Burials], 1754 - 1812, [no p.], Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U3/229/1/3; FHL microfilm 2354739, item 5.

[4] "England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975", database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:N1ZN-SD6: 4 February 2023), Samuel Rooke in entry for Richard Rooke, 1801.

1801 - Birth of son Richard Rook (1801 - 1819) at Badlesmere, Kent, England.[5]

1803 - Birth of son Daniel Rook (1803-1826) at Badlesmere, Kent, England.[6]

Jan 1806- Birth of son James Rook (1803-1826) at Badlesmere, Kent, England.[7]

Jul 1808 - Birth of daughter Sarah Rook (1808 - 1809) at Snelling, Swale Borough, Kent, England.[8]

1808 - Death of wife Lydia Ford (1772 - 1808) at Badlesmere, Kent, England.[9]

Jul 1808 - Death of Daughter Sarah Rook (1808-1809) Kent, England.[10]

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[5] "England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975", database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:N1ZN-SD6: 4 February 2023), Samuel Rooke in entry for Richard Rooke, 1801.

[6] Sheldwich St. James Parish, Sheldwich, Kent, England, Burials, 1813 - 1895, p.117, no. 15, Daniel Rook, 1819; Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U3/186/1/13; FHL microfilm 2354740 item.

[7] England, Kent, Canterbury Parish Registers, 1538-1986", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QGNJ-YNS1: Sun Mar 10 15:00:26 UTC 2024), Entry for James Rooke and Sampson, 2 February 1806.

[8] Selling St. Mary the Virgin, Selling, Kent, England, Composite [Baptisms], 1754 - 1812, [no p.], Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U3/229/1/3; FHL microfilm 2354739, item 5.

[9] Selling St. Mary the Virgin, Selling, Kent, England, Composite [Burials], 1754 - 1812, [no p.], Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U3/229/1/3; FHL microfilm 2354739, item 5.

[10] England Deaths and Burials, 1538-1991", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:J8LB-P5Z: Fri Mar 08 05:39:35 UTC 2024), Entry for Sarah Rooke and Samson Rooke, 17 December 1809.

This period closes Samuel's first marriage and the earliest phase of family formation, marked by repeated births and losses.

12 Oct 1812 - Marriage to Sarah Cox at St Mary the Virgin, Snelling, Kent, England.[11]

From this point forward, Samuel's life appears more consistently in the records of Selling and Sheldwich.

11 Apr 1813 - Birth of son Stephen Rook (1813 - 1884) at Snelling, Kent, England.[12]

STEPHEN ROOK, baptized on 11 April 1813 in Selling, Kent, and married on 28 November 1841 in St. Mary Magdalene, Woolwich, England, SARAH BLAKE. He died on 4 November 1884 at 5 Victoria Street, Belvedere, Erith, Kent.

21 May 1815 -Birth of daughter Elisabeth Rook (1815 - 1837) at Snelling, Kent, England.[13]

ELIZABETH ROOK, born on 21 May 1815 in Sheldwich, and married on 16 August 1834 in Selling, CHARLES WEBB. She died in June 1837 in Kent.

[11] Selling St. Mary the Virgin, Selling, Kent, England, Marriage Banns, 1754 - 1814, p. [43], Samuel Rook - Sarah Cox, 1812; digital image, "Canterbury Marriage," FindMyPast; citing Canterbury Archdeaconry Banns 1754 - 1928, Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U3/229/1/9; FHL microfilm 1850190, item 14

[12] Selling St. Mary the Virgin Parish, Selling, Kent Co., England, Baptism, 1813 - 1849, p. 2, Stephen Rook, 1813; digital image, "Canterbury Baptisms," FindMyPast; citing Kent, Canterbury Archdeaconry Baptisms 1538 - 1912, Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U3/229/1/4

[13] Sheldwich St. James Parish, Sheldwich, Kent, England, Baptisms, 1813 - 1856, p.5, no. 38, Elizabeth Rook, 1815; Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U3/186/1/3; FHL item 5.

11 Jan 1818 - Birth of daughter Sarah Rook (1818 - 1890) at Sheldwich, Kent, England.[14]

SARAH ROOK was born on 11 January 1818 in Sheldwich and married THOMAS BARBER. She died in September 1890 in Faversham, Kent.

4 May 1819 - Death of son Richard Rook (1801 - 1819) at Sheldwich, Kent, England.[15]

11 Jun 1820 - Birth of daughter Matilda Rook (1820 - 1880) at Sheldwich, Kent, England.[16]

MATILDA ROOK was born on 11 June 1820 in Sheldwich and married on 12 October 1844 in Sheldwich, GEORGE SHILLING. She died on 12 May 1880 in Ospringe, Kent.

22 Aug 1822 - Birth of son Charles Henry Rook (1822 - 1901) at Sheldwich, Kent, England.[17]

CHARLES HENRY ROOK, born on 22 August 1822 in Sheldwich, and married circa 1855, ELLEN LANE. He died on 3 October 1901 in Wilmot Township, Waterloo, Ontario.

6 Mar 1825 - Birth of daughter Rebecca Rook (1825 - 1886) at Sheldwich, Kent, England.[18]

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[14] Sheldwich St. James parish, Sheldwich, Kent, England, Baptisms, 1813 - 1856, p.17, no. 134, Sarah Rook, 1818; Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U3/186/1/3; FHL microfilm 2354740 item 5.

[15] Sheldwich St. James Parish, Sheldwich, Kent, England, Burials, 1813 - 1895, p.7, no. 53, Richard Rook, 1819; Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U3/186/1/13; FHL microfilm 2354740 item 15.

[16] Sheldwich St. James parish, Sheldwich, Kent, England, Baptisms, 1813 - 1856, p.11, no. 83, Matilda Rook, 1820; Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U3/186/1/3; FHL microfilm 2354740 item 5.

[17] Sheldwich St. James parish, Sheldwich, Kent, England, Baptisms, 1813 - 1856, p.22, no. 176, Charles Rook, 1822; Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U3/186/1/3; FHL microfilm 2354740 item 5.

[18] Sheldwich St. James parish, Sheldwich, Kent, England, Baptisms, 1813 - 1856, p.29, no. 227, Rebecca Rook, 1828; Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U3/186/1/3; FHL microfilm 2354740 item 5.

REBECCA ROOK, born on 6 March 1825 in Sheldwich and married on 12 October 1845 in Ospringe, Kent, THOMAS JOHNCOCK. She died on 8 December 1886 in Selling.

24 Sep 1826 - Death of son Daniel Rook (1803 - 1826) at Sheldwich, Kent, England.[19]

14 Dec 1828 - Birth of son George Rook (1828 -) at Sheldwich, Kent, England.[20]

GEORGE ROOK was born on 14 December 1828 in Sheldwich.12 He served in the Royal Regiment of Artillery from 1848 until 1854.13

Jun 1837 - Death of daughter Elizabeth Rook Webb (1815 - 1837) at Sheldwich, Kent, England.[21]

1841- England Census at Kent, England.[22]

Samuel Rook, 65

Sarah Rook, 58

George Rook, 12

Ellen Rook, 9

[19] Sheldwich St. James Parish, Sheldwich, Kent, England, Burials, 1813 - 1895, p.117, no. 53, Daniel Rook, 1826; Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U3/186/1/13; FHL microfilm 2354740 item 15.

[20] Sheldwich St. James parish, Sheldwich, Kent, England, Baptisms, 1813 - 1856, p.36, no. 283, George Rook, 1825; Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U3/186/1/3; FHL microfilm 2354740 item 5.

[21] Sheldwich St. James Parish, Sheldwich, Kent, England, Burials, 1813 - 1894, p.26, no. 204, Elizabeth Webb, 1837; digital image, "Canterbury Burials," FindMyPast; citing Canterbury Archdeaconry Burials 1538 - 1988, U3/186, Canterbury Cathedral Archives.

[22] England and Wales Census, 1841", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MQ29-2T1: Sat Mar 09 19:30:10 UTC 2024), Entry for Samuel Rook and Sarah Rook, 1841.

1851- England Census at Kent, England.[23]

Samuel Rook, 80

Sarah Rook, 48

Apr 1855 - Death at Sheldwich, Kent, England.[24]

Apr 1855 - Burial at Sheldwich, Kent, England.[25]

After his death, his wife, Sarah, received poor relief in 1861.

Posthumous evidence: Recent DNA analysis suggests that Samuel Rook's daughter, Mary Rook, may have married James Butler and emigrated to Canada with their son. DNA connections further indicate that Mary Rook Butler's granddaughter, Sarah Butler, married William Cornell, son of Ellen Lane Roach and her first husband, John Cornell. If these DNA relationships are correctly interpreted, Charles Roach and Mary Rook Butler would be half-siblings, sharing Samuel Rook as a common father. This conclusion is based on DNA evidence and later family connections rather than contemporary records.

[23] "England and Wales Census, 1851", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:SGL6-YMX : Fri Jul 26 15:35:09 UTC 2024), Entry for Samuel Rook and Sarah Rook, 1851.

[24] Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QL7T-LHK1: 4 October 2023), Samuel Rook, ; Burial, Sheldwich, Swale Borough, Kent, England, St James Churchyard; citing record ID 178035572, *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.

[25] Sheldwich St. James Parish, Sheldwich, Kent, England, Burials, 1813 - 1895, p.48, no. 382, Samuel Rook, 1855; Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U3/186/1/13; FHL microfilm 2354740 item 15.

Appendix:

Later movement of the family

By about 1841, Samuel's son Stephen had moved west within Kent to the Dartford area, and he later died in Erith. Other descendants of Samuel Rook established themselves in Ospringe.

Summary of Samuel Rook and household circumstances

Samuel Rook was born about 1771 in Wichling, Maidstone Borough, Kent, England, and died about April 1855 in Sheldwich, Swale Borough, Kent. He married first Lydia Ford on 11 October 1795 in Challock, Kent, England, and later married Sarah Cox on 12 October 1812 at St. Mary the Virgin, Selling, Kent.

Sarah Cox, daughter of James Cox and Ann Giles, was born on 1 August 1784 in Hothfield, Kent, England, and died in October 1861 in Kent. Samuel and Sarah are buried in St. James Churchyard in Sheldwich.

In 1813, Samuel was recorded as a pauper associated with the Selling workhouse at the time a child was baptized. Later, he moved his family to Sheldwich. In 1841, he was recorded as an agricultural laborer; in 1851, he was again recorded as a pauper. After Samuel's death, his widow Sarah received poor relief in 1861.

Geographic continuity

As early as 1771, the Rook family lived in Wichling, near the middle of Kent County. By 1812, Samuel Rook was in Selling in the Faversham district. Later, Samuel and his family lived in the nearby village of Sheldwich.

Notes to resolve inside these research notes

- **DNA:** Add a detailed write-up of all DNA matches. Assess whether any DNA clusters suggest the identity of Samuel's birth father (keeping fact and inference separate).
- **Timeline gaps:** Locate any missing records highlighted in red on the research timeline.
- **Scope check:** Review FamilySearch profile Samuel Rook (LWTF-ZY9). The attached records may include children not yet incorporated here.

- **Identity proof point:** State the most decisive evidence that Lydia Ford and Sarah Cox were wives of the same man, and keep that evidence visible where it matters most in the narrative.
- **Working hypothesis (surname line):** Open the overview with the family line being pursued and the current hypothesis (including the possible Rook/Roach connection), stated as hypothesis, not fact.
- **Weaknesses:** Identify the weakest points in the existing research and the places where conclusions may currently outrun the evidence.